THE CLOISTER. NO. 7.

She was not a pretty girl. At least, no one thought her so except the man who loved her, and he, perhaps, was hardly qualified to judge.

It was such a length of time since he had fallen in love with her that he had forgotten his original impressions.

He had gone fishing one day in a nervously irritable mood. Luck had been "down on him," as he expressed it, and a certain gouty uncle from whom he had expectations had suddenly, in a fit of exasperation with his nephew, taken it into his head to marry his housekeeper.

Lawrence moodily cast his line into the trout stream—or attempted to.

He gave a savage whirl of his rod, the line flew far behind him and caught—something. He heard a faint cry and then a voice somewhat shaken saying:

"Please don't pull. I'm hooked."

He plunged back through the thicket and there, under a heavy, overarching mass of trees, seated before an easel, was a slender, thin, dark girl, a brush in her hand, and his trout-fly hooked between her shoulders.

"I did not know there was any one about," she smiled faintly. "You must have come quietly."

"The stream is so noisy here," he said, lifting his soft cap quickly. Then he added, with profuse apologies: "You must regret that there was any one about. Are you brave? Can you stand a little pain? I must get this thing out, you know."

"How must you?" asked the girl, flushing a trifle. "I fear I'm not absolutely heroic."

"Only keep still, and I'll have it out in no time," said Lawrence, making no bones of cutting a little rent in her gown with his pocket knife. "Now, quiet, please. Once again. Done! You are really very brave."

He thought she would faint, she had turned so white, but his words sent the color back and she laughed quite gayly when he said it was ended.

"Only your gown, I fear, is spoiled," he added, wondering inwardly in what way he could offer to repair the damage he had wrought, and finally giving it up as hopeless. "I did not dare leave the hook until we got out of this. It's a good mile to the village, and the beastly thing would have worked its way in, to say nothing of the coloring matter on the fly."

"You are very kind. I have delayed your fishing expedition." She began gathering up her paints and materials as she spoke.

"It is I who have interrupted you," he said in some remorse. "Must you go now? At least allow me to put a bit of this handkerchief over the wound. You mustn't catch cold in it."

He had been obliged to make quite a deep incision. He tore a strip out of the silk handkerchief which had graced the pocket of his Norfolk jacket, and placed it as skillfully as a surgeon over the little wound. Then he laid back the rent corner of the gown and took up his rod.

The girl looked up at him and he hardly noticed her plainness—she was plain—in his delight at seeing himself reflected in a large pair of velvety, dryad-like eyes—not the sort to belong to a girl clearly so independent and matter of fact as this one. Eyes that reminded one of dark, wintry pools under a cold, blue sky. Startling eyes. Magnificent.

"Those eyes should never be yours, young woman," he thought. "They belong to a professional beauty."

"May I not take you home?" he asked aloud. "I am all out of conceit with fishing now. Besides, I feel it my right to keep track of my victim."

"By no means," said the girl calmly. "You must now get some trout. I always escort myself," she added, half smiling. And with a resoluteness which he dared not intrench upon she quickly finished her preparations for departure, tucked the small, folded easel under her arm, and with a slight nod and a determined little air disappeared from view.

So began their acquaintance.

He learned that she was an artist, quite a little celebrity in her way, who came down here each summer to paint, and seemed to be entirely alone in the world, except for a small brother she was bringing up—she had got him as far as the naval academy—and a group of girl friends, some of whom were accustomed to join her during the long vacation.

Of course in that small place it was impossible that they should not meet, and before the summer was over he had told her—he happened to be in a singularly confiding mood, and hers, if not exactly a sympathetic, was rather, perhaps, a receptive nature—some of his hopes, plans, and disappointments, the latter far outnumbering the rest. So, when they parted it was quite a natural thing that he should hold in his hand a card with the street and number of her studio on it.

She wasn't at all the sort of a girl he admired. He had a kind of latent disapproval of independent girls—without chaperons—who lived all alone and didn't seem to feel apologetic about it. The very description sent a shudder through him.

So he rather wondered, one morning, when he found himself climbing the abominably long staircase in the "Cloister" which led to No. 7. He concluded it was because he wanted to tell her that his uncle had gone. Gone to a better world without leaving a sou for his agreeable nephew. Where in the world was he to get his gloves this winter, Jack vaguely wondered.

He found her smoking. He had just thrown away a cigar himself, but his horrified expression amused her.

"I'm sorry I can't offer you one," she said, apparently oblivious of his very visible horror. "It's my last."

She forbore to explain that she had a severe cold and it was medicated cubeb. She tossed it into a jardiniere, and he sat very stiffly on the edge of a chair, uttered a few platitudes, and then took up his stick and hat and gloves and said "Good morning."

As he got down the stairs he remembered he hadn't mentioned his uncle, and he vowed never to go near her again.

"She's positively impossible," he said. "Worse than I thought. Guileless enough in her way, I've no doubt, but—smoking!"

He lighted a cigarette to better soothe his irritated nerves.

The next time they met was at the American artists' salon exhibit.

He was strolling around with the young woman he had about made up his mind to marry, when he caught sight of a familiar and somewhat chic figure over in a corner, the center of a group of girls—evidently no swells.

"By Jove! there's that odd girl again," he said to himself; and he gave such a start that Miss Fayreweather asked him what was the matter.

"Nothing. Only a painter I know," said Lawrence, but somehow omitting to mention the painter's sex.

"A painter! Oh, introduce him, do!" said Miss Fayreweather. "I've always wanted to meet one. I never knew a genius or even a talented person."

"Thanks," said Lawrence, promptly, but grateful for this little digression and gently decoying his guests into a side room, which was the easier to do, as Mrs. Fayreweather was a matron of bulk and anxious for a seat.

"Oh, you have no talent," said Miss Fayreweather, pouting a little, "except to evade demands. Please go and produce your painter."

"He—my—my painter, I mean, has gone by now, I fear; however"—a bright idea striking him—"I'll go and make a search."

"Do so," said Miss Fayreweather.

"Do so," said Mrs. Fayreweather.

"And mind you bring him back," said her daughter, who was not so pleased at Law——'s prompt disappearance.

Jack strode gayly down the halls and soon discovered the object of his search, who, together with her little coterie of friends, were grouped in front of one of the prize pictures and seemed to be having no end of fun among themselves.

He stalked up and held out his hand, somewhat to Susanne's surprise and greatly to the amazement of her friends.

"So glad to have found you," he heard himself saying with a cordiality that surprised him. "I've been looking for you all day. Knew I should find you here."

He told his fib unblushingly, looking down into the inexplicable eyes that were, in their way, so charming.

"Where is your contribution?"

"My—oh, my daub. In a little dark hole—far, far away. You don't want to see it."

"Ah, but I do," he said urgently, and as he insisted that she should show it to him, they led the way, followed by a veritable "Patience" bevy of birls.

They had a very jolly quart d' heure before her picture. Lawrence made himself vastly agreeable all around, and finally betook himself away, radiant, to his deserted ladies in the side room. His face lengthened, however, as he neared the Fayreweathers, and he hoped, he hardly knew why, that Miss Fayreweather wouldn't notice the absence of his gardenia, which he had given to one of the girls in that gay, provoking little group.

"Gone," he said, anticipating Miss Fayreweather's question. "He'll never know what he missed. He must have left just after I saw him."

Lawrence had overcome his compunction at the misapplication of a few personal pronouns.

"You are a long time looking for him," said Miss Fayreweather, just a soupcon unamiably.

"And you've lost that beautiful gardenia," said her mother, regarding him through her eye-glasses severely.

"What an unpleasantly observing old lady," thought Lawrence, hastening to make some feeble observations as to the heat of the rooms and the fragility of hothouse blooms, while the group of art students were chaffing Susanne and saying:

"You never told us he was such a swell, Susanne."

"I never knew it," said Susanne simply. "He certainly didn't seem to be last summer. He wore the simplest, not to say unsightliest of garments and he seemed to be chronically out of funds."

"I'm afraid you don't recognize the animal when you see it," laughed Stephanie. "You're not a connoisseur in swells, my dear Susanne."

Lawrence's dollars were usually conspicuous for their absence; but somehow, some way, he wanted that little picture that was "hung in a dark hole." He felt its possession to be an absolute necessity. Its price was extremely modest, and the day after the exhibition was ended Lawrence viewed it with considerable satisfaction presiding over a miscellaneous collection of bachelor inutilities on his chimney shelf. His only stipulation had been that the purchaser's name should be unknown.

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Susanne was matronizing a "studio tea" in several studios thrown into one, given by a dozen demoiselles of the "Cloister." By a coincidence it was her birthday. Susanne was younger than a number of the women, but her sedateness and the severe seriousness of her deportment in moments when a steadying spirit was needed caused her to be usually selected for the matron or "madonna," as the girls called her. Besides, the small brother she was educating made her seem motherly.

It was a fantastic crowd of girls—all girls—dressed in every possible attire except the usual, who crowded around the samovar, or discussed in groups and with much vigor the relative merits of recent works of art. All were talking paint. Paint was in the air; on the walls; it was the breath of the nostrils.

Susanne was flying about, a tiny Japanese teacup in her hand and a classic kimono, much too long for her, trailing behind. In honor of her birthday two of the girls had placed a fillet of bay leaves on her dark hair.

"I am a horror of different epochs," said Susanne. "Ancient Greek to my shoulders, modern Japanese the rest of the way.

"And early New York as to feet," said Stephanie, inspecting Susanne's small bluchers.

"Here's a French fan to complete the picture," said another girl, a miniature painter, thrusting an ancient and fragile Watteau into her hands.

"Take it away," said Susanne; "it's too delicate for a 'studio tea.'"

One or two arguments that had started with witty epigram and bon-mot, and partly in jest, were getting to border perilously on the serious, and the orators were getting a trifle heated, as art students, even girl students, are apt to do—occurrences strictly against the rule of "studio teas," when Susanne called to order.

"Come, my friends," she said, "and drink a sympathetic cup to the health of a venerable maid over whose head six and twenty tiresome years have rolled. On with the dance! Advance to the samovar!" and Susanne led the way.

"Is a Vandal from the outer world permitted to enter?" came a voice—an unmistakably masculine voice—from the portiere which had been left apart.

This was decidedly no habitue of the "Cloister."

It was Lawrence who stood there, immaculate in softest gray, with gloves of the prescribed ugly brick-red disguising his shapely hands, and a gardenia, which had as yet no intention of drooping, adorning his lapel.

He paused, but flinched not.

Susanne advanced.

"No men are allowed here on Cloister day," she began a trifle severely, but smiling, unconscious that her hair of "painters' tan" was ruffled under her fillet and that her Japanese gown was singularly becoming. "But," she smiled, "I will put it to the vote of my guests."

There was a slight demur at first but no vigorous protesting, and as this was a special day, and Lawrence a special friend, he found himself, after swearing solemnly on the "rules of the Art League" never to present himself on a similar occasion, the center of an animated group, whose witticisms he couldn't parry at all, but to whose Formosa he did ample justice.

While Lawrence drank to the natal day half a dozen others sketched the scene, and after a half hour Lawrence was kindly but firmly dismissed, bearing away with him various thumb-nail sketches, clever cartoons and "fakes" as souvenirs, and leaving his stick behind the door with characteristic carelessness.

He again asked himself, as he descended the somewhat tortuous staircase from "No. 7," why he had gone there; but this time he did not pretend to give himself an answer.

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Lawrence was dressed for the evening, and was hanging about before his grate and smoking a final cigar preparatory to going out to do battle in the great social world which was his arena.

He had gazed at his destiny long enough with averted eyes. To-night he meant to take action.

He had decided, after much inward debate and some hesitation, to ask Miss Fayreweather to marry him, and for that reason had banished to a distant store room, with its face to the wall, his recently-acquired art treasure, which always seemed to have an unsettling effect upon his resolution.

He had arranged his tactics. He should meet Miss Fayreweather at a certain house, and after a dance or two, already promised him, he should ask her to be his. She would—in spite of his modesty, he felt quite sure—she would not refuse to smile on his suit; and he should finally go home the accepted lover of one of the great heiresses of the town.

It was a pleasing little programme.

Lawrence looked at himself in the small glass of the brass sconce which he had substituted for Susanne's water color and sighed.

"Twenty-seven, and a distinct failure," he said a little bitterly. Then he tossed his cigar in the fire and went forth to conquer.

If his waltzes with Miss Fayreweather that evening were not all his fancy painted them the fault was not that of his fair partner. There were was an alertness, an evidence of intention, in Lawrence's manner, that to a young woman as much wooed as Miss Fayreweather, was by no means ambiguous. But as the evening wore on, and Lawrence's assiduousness waned, and his utterances degenerated into platitudes, a certain dismal coldness crept over the fair autocrat's manner. Lawrence was listlessly battling with himself. He had meant to "settle it," as he had said to himself, after the first waltz; then he decided that a "sit-out" in the conservatory would be better. Nothing came of that, and after a time the conservatory filled, so he decided to try the supper room. The supper room was worse than the conservatory, and now, after the second and last waltz Lawrence was fighting the deadly inertia he felt creeping over him, while Miss Fayreweather sat beside him palpably cool, and—one would say of a less delicate subject—preparing to "strike."

Lawrence had started for the conservatory, but his nerves failed him, and they seated themselves near the door while he set his soul to put his vague—alas! too vague—ideas into words.

At this instant a new arrival, a young man, came in, the halo of the jeunesse doree around his well-groomed head.

"Hullo, Charlie!" said Lawrence, clutching at a respite. "You're late. Where've you been all night?"

Charlie came toward them adjusting his binocle.

"Awful crush outside," he said. "Big fire a few blocks away. Couldn't get my cab through at all. Had to get out and walk."

"A fire!" said Miss Fayreweather with a nervous animation born of a semi-scornful tension. "How jolly! I love a fire. I wish one could get at it. I've always wanted to go to a fire ever since I was in pinafores."

"Yes; fires are great fun," said Lawrence, inanely.

"But you couldn't get near this one if you tried, Miss Fayreweather," continued Charlie. "Although I believe no one got hurt, the flames have made tremendous headway. It's a very large building—place where a lot of art students live, called the 'Cloister.'"

"The—the Cloister!" Lawrence started up and strode forward. "Take my place here, will you, Charlie—that's a good fellow," he said in a hoarse whisper; then aloud: "Excuse me if I leave you in better hands for a few minutes, Miss Fayreweather," he said, "I—I have something of value in that building."

"He's run away with my fan, the wretch," said Miss Fayreweather, with a little strained, fatigued laugh. "Does Mr. Lawrence own that building?" she continued in a voice tinged with disdain.

"One would suppose so," said Charlie, an scrutable smile flickering beneath his mustache. "Shall we take a turn?" Then, as she shook her head, "May I sit here a bit? Will you have an ice?"

And Miss Fayreweather took an ice.

—Frank Leslie's Weekly.

Money in Marriages.

Milwaukee Sentinel.

"I have so far this month performed twenty wedding ceremonies which paid me an average of $1 each," said a well-known pastor yesterday. "At this rate I ought to have at least five more before the month is over. Last year my income from weddings of all descriptions was $1,000. You might imagine that I would be enabled from this revenue to build a house or something of the sort, but the fact is that I never use a cent of this money. Some time ago I decided that all my wedding fees should go to my little girl, and every dollar that I have received from this source since then is in the bank to her credit. When she gets old enough it will be used to send her to the best institutions of learning that it is possible to find, and if there is any left over it will be hers. If the marriages keep up at their present rate she ought to be independently rich in a few years."

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

Of the issue of 3,000,000,000 of Columbian postage stamps 1,200,000,000 remain unsold.

A speck of gold weighing a millionth part of a grain may be easily seen by the naked eye.

The steamers between Europe and North America carry on an average about 70,000 passengers a month.

Sierra means a saw, and its application to a range of pointed mountain peaks is very apt and poetical.

France now has 448,000 places for the sale of liquor, an increase of nearly ninety thousand in twenty years.

The number of American residents in the British Iles is 26,226, of whom about 20,000 were born in the United States.

Potatoes first appear in history in 1503. In 1892 the United States raised 201,000,000 bushels. In 1884 the world raised 79,000,000 tons.

The Pall Mall Gazette says three billion gallons of beer were imbibed in Europe last year, of which Germany consumed 1,051,000,000 gallons.

The paper money issued by the first French republic fell to less than 1 per cent. A pair of boots cost 7,500 francs; a pound of butter 750 francs.

Statistics of the yellow fever epidemic at Brunswick, Ga., show that the mortality among whites was nearly four times as great as that among negroes.

By a new route which is proposed from England to Australia, across Canada, the trip from London to Sydney, it is believed, may be shortened to twenty-eight days.

The diamond worn by the Sultan in the aigrette of his plume on parade days was picked up from a dust heap by a poor man of Constantinople during the reign of Mohammed IV.

The title lieutenant comes from a word signifying "holding the place." A lieutenant-colonel holds the place of a colonel in the absence of the latter; a lieutenant holds the place of a captain.

An electric ambulance is in course of construction at St. Louis. It promises to be as swift and steadier than a vehicle drawn by horses, and will be given right of way by the street car companies.

The greatest speed attained by sailing ships, according to Mulhall, was by the James Baines, 420 miles in twenty-four hours, and Flying Cloud, 412. The Red Jacket ran 2,280 miles in seven days, averaging 325 miles a day.

A final survey of the ship canal across the Florida peninsula will shortly be made. The canal will be about three hundred feet wide and about 150 miles in length. It will shorten the distance from New Orleans to Liverpool one thousand miles.

Frogs are mainly juice. If they try to make more than a short journey away from moisture, in a drought, they will perish for want of water, and then their bodies will dry away. The frog's bones are so soft that they scarcely leave any skeleton.

The largest place of amusement ever constructed is the Coliseum at Rome. Its external circumference is 1,728 feet, its long diameter 615, its short 510, its height 156. It had four stories and could seat 60,000 spectators, while 60,000 more could find standing room.

Quill toothpicks came first of all from France. The largest factory in the world is near Paris, where several million quills are dealt with yearly. The factory started to make quill pens, but when these went out of general use it was converted into a toothpick mill.

There are 119,900,000 old copper pennies somewhere. Nobody knows what has become of them, except once in a while a single specimen turns up in chance. A few years ago 4,500,000 bronze two-cent pieces were set afloat. Three millions of these are still outstanding.

Silhouette was the name of a French minister in ante-revolution times. He was a stern economist, and the courtiers had their pictures made in profile and black, facetiously claiming that M. Silhouette had made them so poor that they could not have a regular portrait printed.

The oldest tree on earth with an authentic history is the great Bhoo tree, of Amarahoora, Burmah. For twenty centuries it has been held sacred to Buddha, and no person is allowed to touch the trunk, although the leaves when they fall are carried away as relics by pilgrims.

The last instance of boiling to death took place in Persia in 1890. The offender was found guilty of stealing state revenues, was put into a large cauldron of cold water, which was slowly heated to the boiling point. His bones were distributed, as a warning, among the provincial tax collectors.

In Berlin an inventor has succeeded in devising a means for insuring a complete combustion without the emission of smoke, and his method has, on repeated tests, proved so satisfactory that two of the most important steam shipping companies of Germany have decided on adapting it to their steamers.

There is a strange mixture of names and colors in Greenville, Darke county, Ohio. It is said a lot of negro slaves who were brought there by their master and freed many years ago have intermarried with the whites to such an extent that nearly all the inhabitants are now of mixed blood and uncertain color. The names of the locality appear appropriate.

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

A Wish.

Harper's Young People.

Tommy—I wish I could go to night school.

Papa—Why, Tommy; you go to school all day.

Tommy—Well, if I did, I could play ball all day.

Not Easily Humbled.

Good News.

Litttle Miss Mugg—My mamma's new dress was made in Europe.

Little Miss Freckles—Huh! That's nothing. Our new servant girl jus' landed las' week, an' all her clothes were made in Europe! So there!

Encouraging an Author.

New York Weekly.

Manuscript Reader—Here is a manuscript from some writer I never heard of.

Great Magazine Editor—Well, no use discouraging the poor fellow. Kick it around the floor, so it will look as if it had been carefully read, and send it back.

The Motor.

Harper's Bazar.

"Well, Rastus, how are you? What are you doing now?"

"I'se well, sah. I'se de organist at St. John's, sah."

"You, Rastus?"

"Yessir. I pumps the wind dat makes her screech, sah"

Above Writing It.

Tid Bits.

An old negro who had business in a lawyer's office was asked if he could sign his name. "How is dat, sah?"

"I ask," the lawyer answered, "if you can write your name?"

"Well, no sah. I nuber writes my name. I jess dictates it, sah."

Suspicious Wealth.

Truth.

Kitty—Did you see Mr. Ferris when you called on him?

Tom—No; but I gathered from a hasty inspection of his room that he is a sharp but unprincipled man.

Kitty—Why, what did you discover?

Tom—Three silk umbrellas in the corner.

Disgusting Ignorance.

New York Weekly.

First Waterman—You had some city boarders at your place last summer, didn't you?

Second Waterman—I did, an' a greener lot o' land-lubbers you never saw. Why, durn my eyes, you mayn't believe it, but it's a actual fact some o' them didn't know a bark from a barkentine.

The Way He Spent It.

Judge.

Mrs. Wellment—Why, you are the same man I gave 10 cents, to last week. What did you do with it?

Hungry Harry—Well, I'll tell yer honest, mum. I spent it fer a Turkish bath, a hair cut, a shampoo, a shave, a shine, a white flannel yachting suit an' a diamond pin, an' I'm sorry ter say, mum, dat I'm busted agin.

A Week of Well-Doing.

Good News.

Sunday-school Teacher—I told you last Sunday that I wished each of you would try to make at least one person happy during the week. Did you?

Boy—Yes'm, I made grandma happy.

"That is noble. How did you do it?"

"I went to visit her, and she's always happy w'en she sees I've got a good appetite."

Political Economy.

New York Weekly.

Tramping Tom—There goes one of the fellers that's responsible for half our troubles.

Wayfaring William—Wot's he done?

Tramping Tom—He works every day in th' year, 'cept Sundays, and earns people's money away from them. If it wasn't for such fellers as him, folks 'ud have more money to give us.

Had Cut Her Wisdom Teeth.

New York Weekly.

Mrs. Sharpeigh (who has five daughters married)—Don't have anything to do with that Mr. Smoothleigh. He is a miserable hypocrite, who will deceive you in a thousand ways before you are wedded a year.

Daughter—Goodness! Why do you think so?

Mrs. Sharpeigh—He treats me with as much affection and consideration as if I were his own mother.

A Bright Pupil.

Good News.

Teacher—What is the object of polar expeditions?

Pupil—To find a northwest passage for ships.

Teacher—What can you tell me about the latest attempts?

Pupil—They are now hunting for the northwest passage with dogs and sleds, 'cause there isn't any northwest passage that a ship can get through.

Teacher—Go up head.